**North Dakota Joint Information Center**
**News Release**

**For Immediate Release**
**February 2, 2017**

**Contact: Morton County Public Information Office: 701-595-3596 or 701-426-1587**

## Conditions-based approach to opening Backwater Bridge on Hwy 1806

Mandan, N.D. – The Morton County Sheriff's Department is willing to proceed with its conditions-based, phased approach to removing the barricades on the Backwater Bridge on Highway 1806 despite yesterday's actions from a rogue group of protesters.

"The actions of the rogue protesters have been condemned by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and cleanup efforts seem to be progressing in order to clear the main camp before spring flooding, so I am willing to take the next steps to open the Backwater Bridge," said Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier. "However, rule of law in the area must be restored prior to a complete re-open."

If protesters in the camp continue to be focused on cleanup efforts and no unlawful actions take place, the Department of Transportation could begin repairs of surface and guardrail damage on the bridge next week, contingent upon security in the immediate area and weather conditions.

"I understand the desire of Cannon Ball residents is to have the bridge opened, but we need to ensure that the concerns of all Morton County residents are also considered and that public safety remains a top priority," said Morton County Commission Chairman Cody Schulz. "We want to return southern Morton County to normalcy and will continue to work with tribal and camp leaders to ease tensions and prepare for potential spring flooding."

###